



Poet and Portraiture: Write a Poem

Grade Level: 9th - 12th grade

Unit Objectives: Students will...

1. Use the poetry of Lewis Latimer to gain a deeper understanding of the role of creativity and expression in the life of the inventor.
2. Explore and discuss the unique challenges of the African American inventor and the creative side of Lewis Latimer as an artist and poet.
3. Learn how to construct a poem on a particular theme.
4. Compare and contrast different poems.
5. Work in a small group to share their work and present in front of a group.

Concepts/Skills:

Understanding the components of a poem, experience writing a poem on a theme, participating in a literary review, critiquing other poems, and comparing and contrasting elements of different poems.



Write a Poem

Be creative and write something meaningful.

Challenge

Create a poem to give to someone you love.

Learning Objective

Build upon fundamental creative writing skills.

Duration

Suggestion time 60 minutes

Lesson Outline

Engage	10 minutes
Explore	15 minutes
Explain	30 minutes
Elaborate	5 minutes

ENGAGE

10 minutes

Students will be introduced to the idea of poetry as a form of self-expression. They will learn about the components of a poem compared to prose. When writing, students will keep in mind the ways in which Lewis Howard Latimer used poetry and art as a form of expression that fueled his quest of innovation.

One of the best ways to capture and engage students is by starting with familiar ideas, images, and references. Therefore, have students reflect upon poems that they have heard. Examples of this may include works read in school, bedtime stories, poems they have written for schoolwork, etc. Remind students that many of the songs that they enjoy contain components of poetry. This connection may allow students to be prepared to think figuratively and creatively.

THINKING PROMPT:

Next, have the students consider some common themes in poetry. Task students with understanding the messages behind these poems, no matter how simple they may be. If students are having difficulty coming up with these ideas independently, have them break off into small groups and discuss the questions below.

What is the targeted audience of the poem?

What is the writer trying to achieve through the poem?

Are there parts of the poem that are hard to understand? If so, what do you think the writer is trying to say?

What do you think makes a good poem?

EXPLORE

15 minutes

Watch Video:

[“Lewis Howard Latimer Life Story - Inventor and Innovator”](#)
(6:45 Minutes)



Lewis Howard Latimer (1848-1928), was an African-American inventor, electrical pioneer, and a son of fugitive slaves. With no access to formal education, Latimer taught himself mechanical drawing while in the Union Navy, and eventually became a chief draftsman, patent expert, and inventor.

In addition to his work as a mechanical engineer Lewis Latimer was also a very creative person, writing and drawing were his most expressive forms. He drew pictures and portraits of his family, and wrote poetry about his love for his wife.

KEY VOCABULARY:

Theme: the central idea or message

Mood: the emotional response produced by the poem

Rhyme: two or more words that produce similar sounds

Rhythm: repetitive flow of language components throughout the poem

Simile: form of figurative language which makes a comparison using the words “like” or “as”

THINKING PROMPT:

Lewis Howard Latimer was not only an inventor, but an avid writer and artist. His contributions to science were important and widespread; however, his work as a creative was much more personal and relatable.

*The two poems **Thy Love is Like** and **Poems of Life** are examples of Latimer’s work. After reading the poems, work to answer the following discussion questions.*

Poems of Life

Life

Praise

A happy life

The worker

Friends

The wanderer

Thinking?

The valley of simplicity

Go ahead or stand aside

Drink to the dead

The endless chain

Thy love is like---

Thy love is like the cooling shade of trees;
When summer's scorching sun is high,
We seek their shade and woo the wandering breeze,
Which wanting we must faint and sink and die.
My heart was wandering on a desert plain;
When love revealed before it lay;
I sought thy heart's recesses, and all pain,
All languor ceased, and sorrow fled away.
Thy love is like the cooling shade of trees,
Wherein my heart finds soft repose;
While like the waves unnumbered of the sea,
My ever rising passion ceaseless flows.
My love is like the cooling shade trees;
Or like the fragrant breath of flowers;
My thoughts fly to thee as the wayward bees,
Return to seek again the honeyed bowers.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What is the theme or message of Poems of Life?

What is the mood of Thy Love is Like?

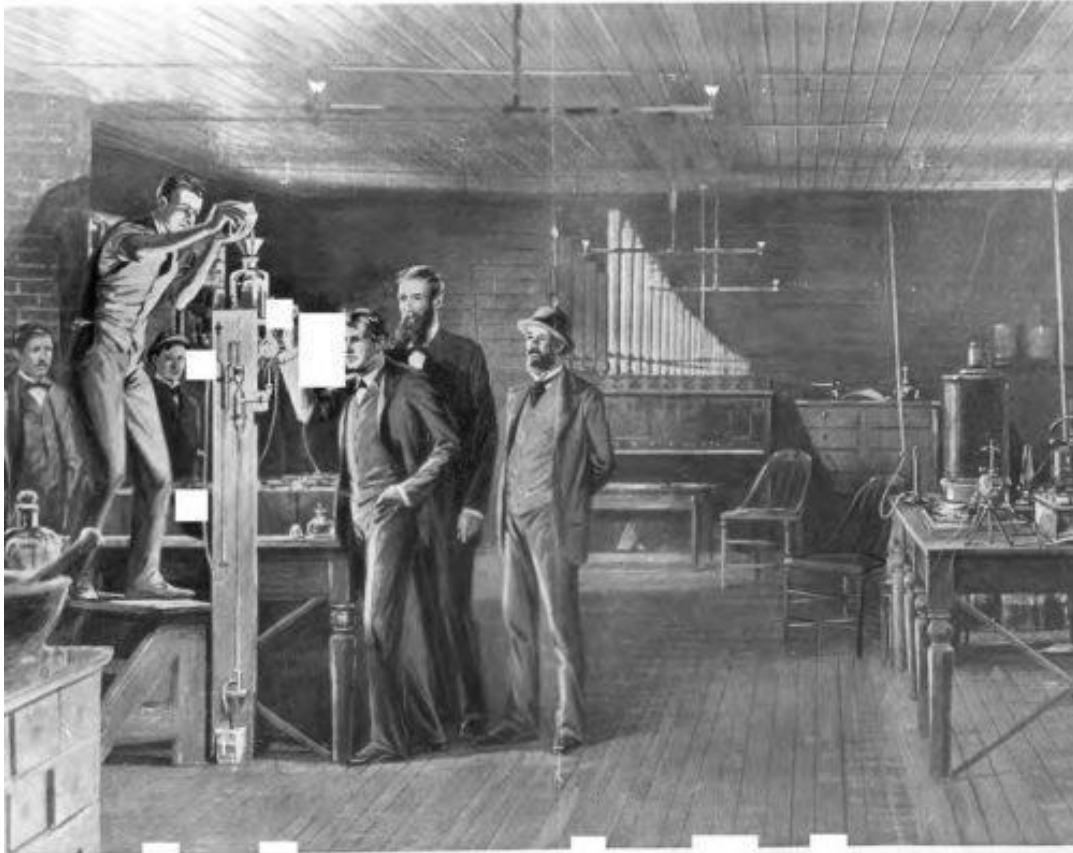
What literary techniques does Latimer use? What are some examples and what do the examples mean? How do they enhance the poem?

What are some similarities between the two poems? Think about the messages, structures, and audiences of the poems.

What are some differences between the two poems? Think about the messages, structures, and audiences of the poems.

EXPLAIN

30 minutes



Lewis Latimer was an inventor who lived and worked in the late 1800's. His ideas brought new and improved inventions to people in the United States and around the world. He had many ideas, and some of those inventions are the foundation of a machine we have today. Through the context of the next activity, we will learn about the process of writing poems.

WORKSHEET

NAME

DATE

GRADE

TEACHER

ACTIVITY

In the space below write a poem about something that is important to you. Latimer writes about both love and work: two things that were fundamental to his life. Using Latimer’s work as inspiration, think about something you feel passionately about and construct a poem describing how you feel about it. Your poem should project the mood that you feel to your audience. Feel free to include any literary techniques to enhance your work.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

What inspired your poem?

Who is the audience for your work?

What mood were you trying to create?

What is the central theme of your poem?

What literary devices did you use and how do they affect your poem?

BRAINSTORM

Lewis Howard Latimer used poetry as a creative outlet to portray more personal ideas compared to his work as an inventor.

Have students read their poems to the class and provide feedback to one another on their work.

Brainstorm a List of topics and common themes:

As a class, brainstorm the common themes and elements used by students. Allow students to talk to one another about their processes in writing. Allow them to reflect on how they wrote their poems. What was the inspiration for the poem and were there commonalities among students? What were some of the common themes that students came up with?



ELABORATE

5 minutes

Task students with creating an additional poem. However, this time students write a poem for a specific audience rather than a theme as before. Allow students to think of a loved one for whom they want to write a poem. The piece could be about any topic as long as it is targeted for this specific audience. Motivate students to write this poem and share it with the intended recipient.

EVALUATE

5 minutes

ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

After students have written and presented their poems to the class, evaluate their understanding of the lesson. After completion of the activities students should be able to complete the following. Evaluate their work based on the clarity of the theme, development of mood, overall flow, and presentation.

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement
Student demonstrated an understanding of how to employ a coherent theme in a poem.				
Student wrote a poem that conveyed a clear mood throughout the poem.				
Student was able to write a logical poem that flowed.				
Student used literary devices in a way that enhanced their poem.				
Student wrote in a way that was understandable and free from grammatical and literary error.				

Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).